

Distinctive Marks of the Guajiro Castes

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Mark	Caste	Place	Totem	Mark	Caste	Place	Totem
☉	Epiayu	Alta Guajira	Macaw	☉	Hayariyd	Alta Guajira	Dog
☉	"	"	"	☉	"	Castilletes	"
☉	"	Portete	"	☉	"	Nazareth	"
☉	"	"	"	☉	Uraliyd	"	Rattle-snake
☉	"	Jarare	"	☉	Sapuana	Alta Guajira	Garay on
☉	"	"	"	☉	Pushaina	Jarare	stone curlew
☉	"	Alta Guajira	"	☉	Goujird	Pto. Estrella	Peccary
☉	Uriana	San José	Jaquar	☉	Arpu-shana	Alta y Baja Guajira	Partridge
☉	"	"	"	☉	Husayd	Jarare	Turkey buzzard
☉	"	Buenos Aires	"	☉	Epinayd	"	Rabbit
☉	"	Pto. Lopez	"	☉	Uléguaana	Alta Guajira	Burro
☉	"	Cosina	"	☉	Hirnd	"	Machorro
☉	"	Alta Guajira	"	☉	Pausayd	"	Fox
☉	"	"	"	☉	Sijuana	Yimard	Black wasp
☉	"	"	"	☉	"	Pto. Espada	Bee
☉	Ipuana	"	Mushale	☉	"	Alta Guajira	"
☉	"	Jarare	"	☉	"	"	"
☉	Hayariyd	Alta Guajira	Dog	☉	Guaririyd	"	Partridge

/The heading, the column headings, and the column entries under "Totem" have been translated from the Spanish. /

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114 two wives of the influential and intelligent Cacique Bríscol
614 (alias Antonio Juan López); from both I was given the assur-
178 ance that it is known to nearly all of their people. In a subse-
614 quent conversation with still other women it became clear
that the social and juristic role of the clan system had become
simplified and dulled in the course of the centuries up to the
present, and above all that the original rigor of its demands
had become milder and in part even lost. Certain practices
still maintained and various fragments of tradition permit
one to piece together an adequately clear picture of the
totemistic organization in Guajira, despite many manifestations
of mother-right.

614 Our Indians have a mythological explanation of how the
whole Guajiro people was originally divided into many clans

• [212] (8). Each totem-clan has its individual symbol, comparable

8. Petruccio (p. 155) supplements
this by confirming: "Casta [is]
the major social grouping in
Guajiro society. Each casta claims
a mythological origin and holds
sovereignty over a well-defined
territory" /cited in English/.

614 to a monogram. Every clan-member marks himself and his
personal goods, predominately domestic animals, with it.
212 The Indians paint this symbol with ordinary watercolor on a
422 stone, carve it in wooden objects (plates, style of a mattock,
231 house posts), tattoo it on their arms, etc., all in plain fun
and without any serious intention of demonstrating their right
of ownership. On the other hand, the same symbol, which is
peculiar to a clan, is branded without exception on every
domestic animal that the individual clan-member owns.
Obviously it is the same sign for all the animals of all the
members of a particular clan; yet the animals remain /537/
the personal property of their owner, and the latter himself

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614 knows precisely which animals belong to him and which
 212 property belongs to other clan-members.

231 In a way also customary among us (for example, the
 422 burning on of the steed-brand for foals), the clan-symbol
 in Guajira is pressed into the skin of the domestic animal
 with a branding iron, usually on the rear leg, sometimes on
 [413] the lower neck. The branding iron is a rod as thick as a
 finger and about a meter long, on whose lower end the brand,
 made in iron, is fixed. This is highly heated and briefly
 set on the skin of the animal with moderate pressure (9).

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9. Everyone knows that many
 livestock-raising primitive
 peoples use the method described
 here for "branding" their domestic
 animals, and, to be sure, do it
 primarily with the intention of
 indicating the individual possessor
 or a group consisting of several
 men as the owner. M. Merker
 (p. 163) reports this for the Masai.
 H. Field collected more than a
 thousand such markings (Figs. 24-43)
 among the Bedouin and related tribes
 in the Near East. It might seem
 surprising that individual ones among
 them are very similar to the brands
 of the Guajiro. This correspondence,
 however, can easily be traced
 back to the mentality of the natives
 and their undeveloped technical
 skill, as well as to the brittle
 wrought-iron itself. The "branding
 iron" probably goes back to an
 earlier period of mankind; from its
 place of invention, it went on its way

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171 around the world simultaneously
231 with the domestic animals them-
422 selves.

614 The branding described was probably learned by the
212 Indians from the Spaniards themselves, simultaneously with
231 the adoption of the first European domestic animals, and
422 has been retained since then. It is all the more surprising
177 that the branding iron (hierro) appears in an old myth which
614 for its part clearly states where the customary individual
212 clan-signs came from. The following version (according to
773 V. Gutiérrez, p. 168) is common in the northern part of the
peninsula:

Not far from Nazareth (10) a hill rises behind Itojoro.

[131]

10. This post lies only several
kilometers south of Puerto Estrella
and is actually a small Catholic
mission station. Cf. Stutzer,
pp. 131 ff., and Barranquilla,
pp. 151 ff.

Here, under an oil tree, Mareiwa (11) came into the world.

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11. That is the spelling of this
mythological name that I felt to
be correct, as did V. Gutiérrez
(p. 168). Chaves (1946, p. 307)
explains in the myth concerning
"Las Serranías de la Guajira,"
among other things: "Mareigua
[is] one of the principal deities
of the Guajiro people, who with
his supernatural power converts
persons into hills, separates the

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sea from the land and the planting of trees and animals to benefit man" /translated from the Spanish/. The original figure of Mareiwa is probably that of a culture-hero. Chaves (1953, p. 183) makes the same assumption, but adds that this personality is "at the present time like God for many mestizos" /translated from the Spanish/. Jahn (p. 183) declares "that the Spanish have identified Mareiwa with the true God or Supreme Being" /translated from the Spanish/. In Torrano (p. 188) one reads "Maréigua • God, Supreme Being" /translated from the Spanish/. Unfortunately even today it is still true that the "Goajiro religion is imperfectly known" /cited in English/ (Armstrong-Métraux, p. 382).

- 614 He was found as an infant, who grew rapidly like any Indian child. He ate tuuma (12) and dressed like the Guajiro.
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12. It was identified for me as tuna, which is the fruit of the Opuntia (Indian fig) and very well-known in South America. Cf. Vegamian, p. 214.

The mother was an old woman; her hut stood in the north.

The father, a certain Saramai, was also said to be a god.

[824]
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Because Mareiwa was born under an oil tree, this tree does

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614 not lose its green leaves, even in the dry season. The Indians
 212 seek shelter under its branches during storms, because lightning
 773 will not strike there.

[824] /538/ Mareiwa created an Indian woman named
 [821] Borunka; she became the mother of all the Guajiro people (13).

[114] 13. Chaves (1953, p. 181) reports another myth of the "Origen de los Guajiros," in which, however, the totem clans are not mentioned; therefore, no contradiction of the myth presented here can be brought forward from there.

He also gave her a companion, by whom she became pregnant. When the time of her delivery came, however, she felt incapable of giving birth. The pains lasted for three days without delivery. Her vagina was set with teeth. Mareiwa removed them. At the same time he took two ribs, the lowest one from each side, from her mate. He inserted them in Borunka so that she could later give birth without hindrance, though not without pain.

614 Since loss of blood was connected with delivery since
 212 then, Mareiwa summoned all the birds. He commanded the
 773 sangre de toro, or pincwait, to wash itself where the birth
 825 took place. He gave the same order to the troupials (weaver
 844 birds of the family Icteridae), as well as to the icó [Ishu,
Phoenicotraupis rubra] with the black wings, whose breast
 feathers and head-tuft are red in color, and finally to the
 macaws. The woodpecker [Ceophloeus lineatus] arrived
 late for this bath. Mareiwa said to him, "You came late,
 to be sure, but I shall paint your tuft anyway," and he painted
 it red. Thus, the birds mentioned have red spots in their
 plumage.

614 Borunka bore several children, and the Guajiro pro-
 212 ceeded to multiply. When there were many of them, Mareiwa
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614 returned to them. He distributed among them the seeds of
 212 the watermelon (Citrullus vulgaris), maize (Zea), squash,
 773 and all the other vegetables with which the Guajiro nourish
 [212] themselves. Until that time no Guajiro had laid out a seeded
 field; before that anyone who wished to eat had reached for
 the fruit that grew by itself. Mareiwa gathered all the
 614 zancalargas (thin-legged grallatores) and weaver birds; he
 212 commanded a flock of them to go far away and feed on
 773 iguarayas (cereals) and the fruit of the Indian fig (Opuntia).
 825 He likewise summoned a flock of rock pigeons; they brought
hepechi cherries. Then he distributed the birds over all of
 Guajira. With their excrement they were to make the simul-
 taneously eliminated seeds germinate; the latter were to grow
 and cover the whole land with a blanket of plants on which
 fruit would ripen and serve the people for food.

614 Mareiwa handed over to each native man a pair of goats,
 212 donkeys, cattle, horses, and pigs. Then he assembled all
 773 the people with their animals in the district of Arachi near
 [230] Siapana. There, on a cliff, he engraved the symbols, one
 of which he intended to assign to each of the family groups,
 the children of Borunka. They are still visible today on that
 cliff.

Thus he established there the sign-patterns for the
 Epiayú, Ipuana, Uriana, Sapuana, Jayariyú, Apsana, Sijuana,
 Urariyú, Epinayú, Jitnú, Soriyú, Pausayú, Uriyú, Woriyú,
 Urenanaka, Matpishana, Uyarayú, Wariruyú, Jusayú,
 Woruboruyú, and others. Mareiwa handed over these property
 [222] marks to the people in order that the movable property of one
 group would not be mistaken for that of the others.

614 Each group has its animal-sign by means of which it
 212 distinguishes its property from that of the other groups. This
 773 happened for the following reason: these animals were to
 825 have become Indians. But they ate the herds that Mareiwa
 422 had assigned to each group. As punishment he left them in
 their animal state as symbols of the individual groups which

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619 had been insulted or harmed by them. Thus, the leader of
 612 the black vultures /Coragyps atratus foetens/ had eaten a
 773 head of cattle of the Epiayú, and he therefore remained the
 825 symbol for this group. The caricari /Brazilian falcon/ de-
 422 voured an animal of the Ipuana group. The Uriana people
 now have as their totem-animal the jaguar (Felis onca). The
 Sapuana group claims for itself the alcaraván /stone curlew/
 (Burhinus bistriatus vocifer), the Jayariyú people the dog, the
 Apsana the kite, the Sijuana the wasp, the Uriariyú the
 rattlesnake (Crotalus terrificus), the Jitnú people the fox
 (Canis azarae), the Soriyú people the cataneja (macaw, Ara),
 the Pausayú the black wasp, the Uyarayú the deer (Cervus
alaphus), etc.

614 /539/ V. Gutiérrez (p. 170) then presents another myth.
 773 This describes how the individual totem-clans were assigned
 their names and definite districts of residence after a fateful,
 tragic scene of disobedience of the creatures against their
 creator took place. This report, too, emphatically brings
 out the fact that Mareiwa personally, by his will and authority,
 introduced a totemistic way of life for the first living beings
 in Guajira. The myth has the dramatic conclusion: "For the
 last time Mareiwa spoke with them [the totem groups] in
 order to take his leave. He therefore addressed them: It was
 my will that you should live here! I am leaving now; I shall
 be watching you from heaven."

614 The individual totem-districts with the thirty-four clan
 101 names are noted on the map (14).¹ The appropriate clan-

193 14. The spelling and pronunciation
 194 of the clan designations favored here
 614 by and large resemble the Spanish
 sounds. Young Indians today feel
 a marked uncertainty in using the
 correct Spanish names for individual
 totem-animals; even in the pro-
 nunciation of the Guajiro designations

¹ [see p. 9. -Analyst]

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614 Crist (p. 485) wrote: "The Indians of the Guajiro are divided into various clans or blood groups, castas, each with its distinguishing totem representing the animal with whose traits, according to legend, the clan was originally imbued" /cited in English/.

614 2A The thought complex that has solidified around the totem of our Indians — to mention it once more in conclusion — gets significant confirmation of its truly totemistic character by the visible symbol for each one of the three dozen of them. None of these totem signs — whether one calls them clan signs, symbols, monograms, emblems, property marks, or something else — is revealed as typically Christian or Spanish in design. The Indian women of olden times wove them into their pieces of weaving, and, as has already been mentioned above (p. 10), the men put their clan-signs on other objects. According to the myth, the original ancestor of a given clan was assigned it in an individual presentation by Mareliwa himself, and it has been retained down to the present day. /See the foreign text for the list of "Sources Mentioned," pp. 541-542./

/542/ Supplement:

114 614 As a consequence of a long stay in East Asia, which I concluded a short time ago, two pertinent articles first came to my attention when the article presented here was already in printing:

[113] Santa Cruz, Antonio, "Acquiring Status in Guajiro Society," Anthropological Quarterly, 33, 1960, pp. 115-127.
Wilbert, Johannes, "Identificación Etno-Lingüística de Tribus Indígenas del Occidente de Venezuela," Mem. Soc. de Ciencias Natur. La Salle, 21, 1961, pp. 5-14.

Both articles refer to the clan-division among the Guajiro described by me. The almost completed printing of my article, however, does not permit me to discuss them in detail; therefore this brief reference must suffice.